

NEWS RELEASE

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Health Fund announces annual Special Project award

The E.C. Tyree Health & Dental Clinic of Saint Mark United Methodist Church received the 2008 Janet Sevier Gilbreath Special Project Award presented by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

The annual recognition honors the grant project which has done the most to advance the Health Fund's vision of the Christian health community. The award is named in memory of the Health Fund's first chairperson, and was instituted in 1988 following Gilbreath's death.

In making the award, Health Fund President Kim Moore pointed out many churches support improved access to health care through donations or volunteer work; but that Saint Mark United Methodist Church took more direct action. It built the E.C. Tyree Health Clinic at its church, 1525 North Lorraine in Wichita. Schaunta James-Boyd is the Executive Director and accepted the award on behalf of the clinic and church.

After hearing about a growing unmet need for dental care among the poor and uninsured, Moore said the church was again responsive and direct. With the assistance of a \$57,400 Health Fund grant, St. Mark successfully expanded its health clinic to include a new two- operatory dental facility in 2008.

According to Moore, the clinic was selected for the award because of its combined achievement of successfully establishing a dental clinic to serve those in need, the level of volunteer and financial support involved, and the demonstration of good management and financial practices to assure quality service delivery and sustainability.

The clinic now offers full-time dental hygiene services Monday through Friday. In addition, a dentist is available three evenings each week. The clinic currently provides preventative hygiene services, fillings, extractions, and emergency care.

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In the past six months, the clinic provided care for 439 patients. Outreach services extend to children's programs, senior citizen services, summer camps, and several local schools. A partnership with an area elementary school provides oral health education, screenings, and fluoride varnish at the school. Outreach efforts provided oral health education and screenings to more than 600 children in the clinic's first year.

Now that the clinic is open, Moore said, the need for access to dental care is even more apparent to the church. Half of the clinic's patients live on less than \$10,000 a year. The vast majority lack insurance coverage. Most have a medical condition, but are not under the care of a physician. So the Tyree clinic has established a dental advisory committee and is gaining the commitment of ten local dentists to provide services equivalent to a full-time dentist.

The clinic anticipates expanding its capabilities soon so it can provide additional services such as root canals, crowns, and dentures. The clinic also will become a rotation site for a local dental assistant program.

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, Hutchinson, makes grants each year totaling around \$3 million. The funder concentrates on addressing three important health issues with its grants: oral health, access to healthcare, and healthy lifestyles. Since its founding in 1986, the Health Fund has invested more than \$50 million in health, healing, and wholeness for Kansans. Additional information about its activities and initiatives is available at www.healthfund.org.

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